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## 30 PERCENT QUOTA REFUSED

# Women Fight For Role In The ANC

*Nine women made it onto the ANC's National Executive Committee amid heavy debate with emotions running high.*

● *TEBOGO ALEXANDER speaks to some members of the Women's League and ANC supporters about the future role of women in the organisation.*

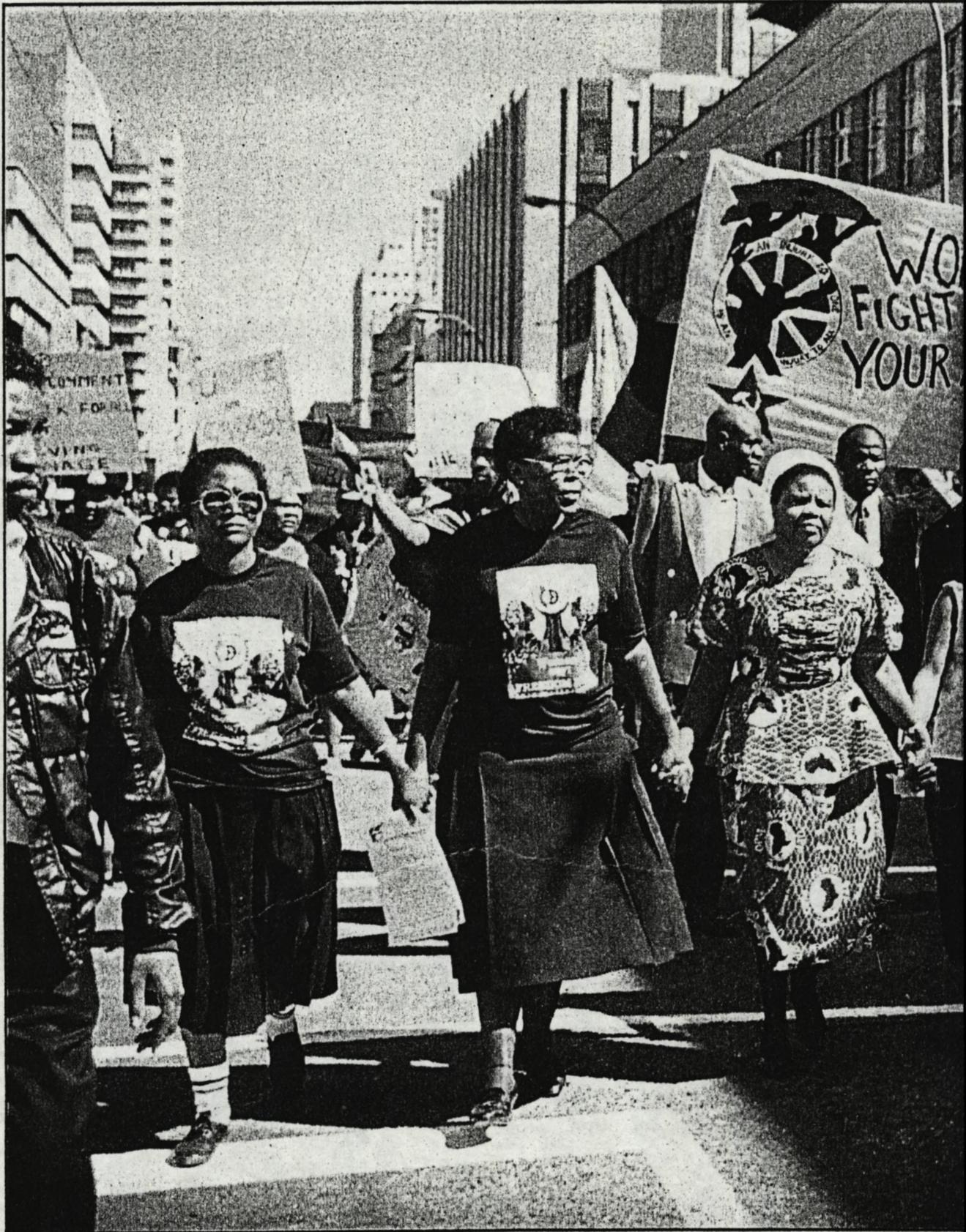
**N**ever before have women, in the 79-year history of the African National Congress, become subject of such vehement debate as they did in the movement's recent 48th National Conference.

● The women brought the Durban deliberations to a five-hour halt: demanding equal representation of men and women within the then incoming National Executive Committee - a demand that was unacceptable by the male-dominated delegation.

For many, this bold stand, was regarded as a breakthrough in gender issues. Even though short-lived, it shook the conference to its foundations as the women expressed their determination. Realising that their demand for a 30 percent quota had been refused, they retaliated with a sit-in, resulting in a stoppage of the proceedings, before deciding to withdraw their demands.

The *amakhosikazi* (women) regarded it, not as a withdrawal, but rather as a tactical pull-out to "re-strategise" as it became obvious that the delegates were not prepared to accept a quota, particularly as the proposal had not been adequately prepared. Often, discussions took a sour turn, forcing the women to realise that not a lot of work had been put into preparing their demands.

The ensuing debate - "there was a lot of tension and strong feeling running



high," described a delegate - forced the liberation movement to face the fact that there was a need for its members to consciously set in motion means to address the question of promoting women, as a compromise.

In an assessment, following the

debate, Baleka Kgositsile, of the Women's League, said there was "no bad blood". The League had agreed that it was not being "consciously left out" and that it was just the "way people are socialised". It gave the women more reason to address the situation

## Women Fight For role

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The hardening of attitudes at the end of the day resulted in comments such as: "What are these women (from exile) coming to teach our wives?" and "The positive thing was that there was that long debate. And I must say that the two sides were just as strong ..."

According to Baleka, while there were conference delegates - both men and women - who were articulate in their arguments for women, there were strong feelings that "we (women) were not ready at this stage".

Patrick "Terror" Lekota was one of the men who favoured the quota. According to one delegate, "Terror" had no problems with affirmative action and women's rights, but felt, as did many delegates, that the quota debate was being imposed and that not enough groundwork had been done.

An ANC supporter, Siziwe Mazwai, of Alice, Ciskei said she strongly opposed the quota and believed the ANC's leadership catered for everybody.

"It's not necessary to make it a standing rule that a certain percentage of women get elected to leadership positions."

Although opposing the quota, a more vocal Patricia Mahlangu, a Cape Town freelance journalist, expressed her disgust at the manner in which women were represented in leadership positions. "Looking at the leadership of any political organisation across the board is ridiculous. Sometimes the amount of women in leadership positions may reflect the amount of women in the organisation as a whole.

"If organisations don't actively address gender issues, the differences remain the same."

But the general feeling among the delegates was that the movement did not have women of merit to fill the 30 percent quota. Of the 104 nominees to the NEC, 25 of them were women.

Said Feroza Adams: "We strongly oppose this. You only have to look at your former leadership to see that it was not only a matter of merit. As far as I'm concerned, if you look back at all the committees that have been in top positions, you could have replaced half of them, if not more, with women who were not seen, not recognised."

She believed that there were cases where women were made invisible. "I think there have been cases whereby a person becomes largely visible because of other people around that person,

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and not so much because of merit ... But they have been isolated.

"Each one of the nine (women elected to the NEC) have strong points for being elected. Although I would not necessarily have felt that one or two



● Adelaide Tambo, wife of ANC leader, Oliver Tambo

were of leadership calibre, this can also be said about the men."

The nine women elected to the NEC conference are Ruth Mompati, Albertina Sisulu, Cheryl Carolus, Winnie Mandela, Gertrude Shope, Barbara Masekela, Sister Bernard Ncube, Gill Marcus and Marion Sparg.

"The point is, there are comrades who are hard-working; who have been in the struggle for a long time; who know the movement; who know their work very well, but this does not necessarily give one leadership qualities. There is something else needed, besides experience, to make a leader.

"There are women who I felt should have gone into top positions years ago. But for women in the ANC, there's that problem of invisibility of women," said Feroza.

She accused the ANC of being "extremely slow" in terms of the participation of women in structures, "in spite of all the progressive statements made".

Illustrating some of these prejudices against them, Baleka pointed out how during the formation of the constitutional committee, not one woman was elected to sit on it. She questioned how a document, with such grave implications for the future of the country, got drawn up without input from over 50 percent of the population.

Another ANC supporter, Abigail Johannesen, of Noordgesig, told *True Love* that women had "the stuff" to make it to leadership positions. "And often their domestic duties and responsibilities prepare them for any leadership role. The public must be allowed to accept women in leadership positions.

"The quota thing is tokenistic. It is about time organisations put women into leadership. Women must not be selected to such positions because they are women, but they must be there because of the qualities they have. And what they can do!

"The question of the election of women into structures is not an automatic thing. If it were, then we do not need any structure to implement it, and that ultimately means that you're assuming that the people in the ANC are not victims of the very socialisation that we have been subjected to in South African society."

She added: "I support the quota in the context of looking for a mechanism for implementing affirmative action."

For Feroza, the one problem that could arise from the quota, was having members choose from candidates among whom there were some they did not want in contested positions.

"I will not support the quota if it became a situation of just reserving seats, and just putting women there just because they're women. The quota must put competent women there instead.

"As women, it is difficult to get the same positions as men," added Feroza. "The general perception is that women must have exceptional qualities to fill the posts. But the same rules are not applied with men.

"When the issue of merit is raised, it undermines women in that it indicates there are no 15 women competent enough to fill those posts. That is at least one good woman in every region."

Never before in the history of the liberation movement has the issue of women's emancipation been discussed. And should anyone think that the women have not been taking notes, it would be a drastic mistake. By the next national conference, they would have sharpened their claws ...

through applying deliberate methods and mechanisms.

The League demanded to be represented in the executive "on the same basis as other autonomous bodies within the organisation; that the movement's constitution be amended to require that a minimum of 30 percent of NEC members, office bearers, be elected".

According to Feroza Adams, the diminutive, and often ferocious, advocate of women's rights, when the quota was put forward at the conference, it was seen as an "interim measure to create that balance that does not exist

For some women, the quota was a "compromise". Adelaide Tambo, wife of the ANC leader Oliver Tambo, for example, was reported to have said that "women should be getting no less than 50 percent".

These demands, which arose from clauses written into a Lusaka draft constitution, were re-affirmed at the League's Kimberley conference. The Kimberley resolutions read in part: "... That the incoming leadership of the ANC should consult and prepare a mechanism for implementing the quota at the national conference".

it isn't a reflection of the movement. There will be something the men will not have experienced, either in the ANC or society in general."

It was unanimous, among the women, that they had not fully prepared for the conference. "Though there were many structures that adopted the quota, there were people, among them women, who had not fully grasped what it really meant. This is precisely what created the difficulty," said Baleka.

She added that the main cause for improper planning and presentation had been the time constraints which the women faced between their Kimberley national conference and Durban. "We didn't get down to doing the things that needed getting done. Had the debate and discussion been taken effectively to branches and brought up systematically to regions who were preparing for the national conference, we would have solved half the problems that were reflected."

The embarrassing result was that many women were asking themselves and other delegates "What is this quota?" or "What affirmative action?", destroying any case they could make as there seemed to be confusion among themselves.

This unpreparedness was reflected in the number of women who bitterly opposed the quota; a clear signal that many of their constituencies had not grasped what the League was battling for. Among those who did not agree, said another delegate, was Winnie Mandela.

According to the delegate, Winnie's problem was that she had not been involved in the earlier Women League debates on this particular issue. She is said to have also been suspicious of the people raising the quota issue.

She has been heard to have said the quota is being pushed by "people who have no roots on the ground; who simply want to float at national level; people who want to impose themselves into leadership positions".

Her apparent attitude reinforces the perception that the two opposing views on the quota are between the internal and external wings of the ANC, a supposition denied by the League.

Another delegate, who wished not to be named, commented on how many of the delegates - who seemed clearer on the issues - were among "the people who had discussed this issue in exile". This, she said, made it look like this was an issue from outside being imposed, which was unfortunate.

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presently; to force the ANC to look out for the competent women that do exist. Though questions were being raised as to the competence of women to fill the requested positions, it can be doubted that there are no women in the movement's structures to do so".

Baleka told *True Love*: "In our demands for a quota, we're not only referring to the NEC, but also delegations. There must be women's participation when delegations are sent to, for example, the United Nations or the Organisation for African Unity. If not,

## Two Killed in Hostel Attack

Two workers at Kendall power station near Witbank were shot dead yesterday morning during an attack on an Eskom owned facility's hostel. A Numsa spokesperson said 5 other workers were injured when the attackers drove up to the hostel in a minibus and opened fire. He alleged they were IFP supporters from Khutala Mining Services.

# ANC Youth challenge Buthelezi

THE African National Congress Youth League yesterday challenged Inkatha Freedom Party leader, Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi to prove his commitment to peace and freedom — by joining the Patriotic Front

In a statement the ANC Youth League said unsubstantiated and serious allegations were made against the ANC and its leadership at the IFP Youth Brigade conference over the weekend.

It challenged Chief Buthelezi to prove he was not a "stooge of the South African Government and police" by joining the anti-apartheid forces in the Patriotic Front.

The ANC Youth League appealed to the IFP Youth Brigade to desist from its propagation and involvement in violence.

Furthermore the ANC Youth League said the IFP Youth Brigade deserved to be condemned for the "bellicose and aggressive tone in which resolutions of the conference

were couched".

"The deliberate interference with the current peace efforts by Inkatha Youth Brigade should be seen in the context of the history of Inkatha Freedom Party and its component parts. That history is one of violence against the oppressed majority and a pathological opposition to the freedom of our people," the ANC Youth League said.

It said the ANC Youth League was disturbed by the emergence of the vilifications at a time when almost all political parties, including the IFP, were involved in discussing the Draft National Peace Accord.

"One of the provisions of the Draft Accord is that organisations should refrain from verbal abuse that might lead to violence," it said.

It further accused Chief Buthelezi of converting the IFP Youth Brigade conference into a "sermon of slander and abuse against the ANC". — Sapa.

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